



DEFENSE EQUAL OPPORTUNITY MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE

(DEOMI)

**EOAC 2100
Required Reading**

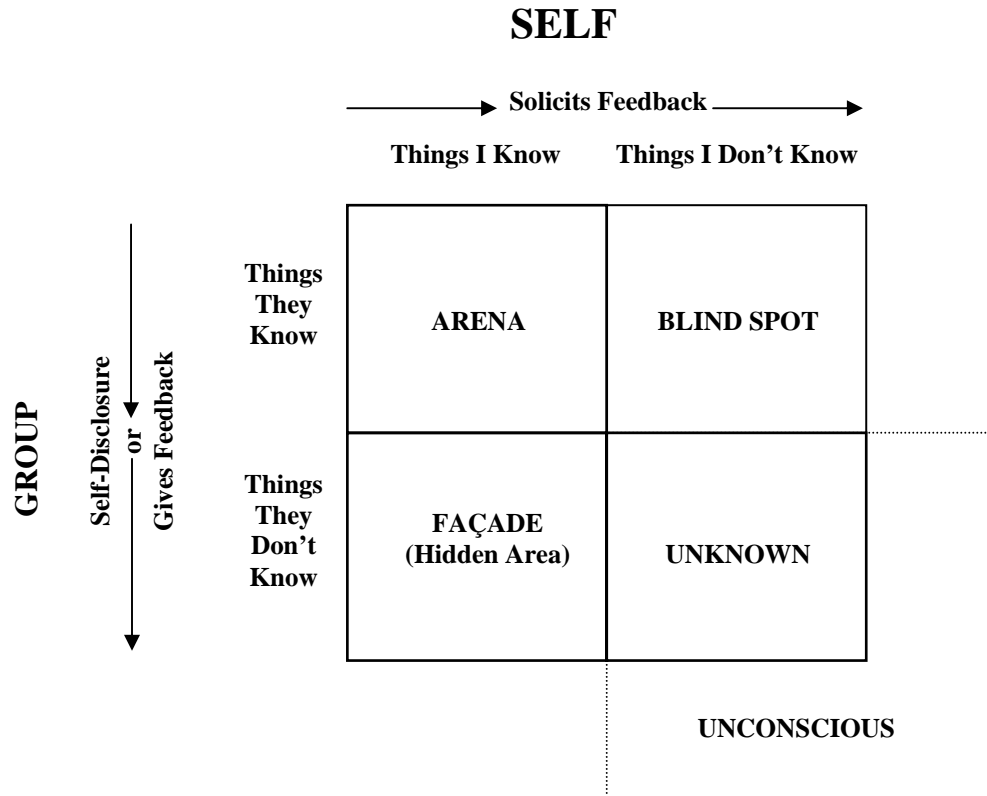
THE JOHARI WINDOW

THE JOHARI WINDOW:

A MODEL FOR SOLICITING AND GIVING FEEDBACK

The process of giving and receiving feedback is one of the most important concepts in laboratory training. It is through feedback that we implement the poet's words, "to see ourselves as others see us." It is also through feedback that other people know how we see them. Feedback is a verbal or nonverbal communication to a person or group providing them with information as to how their behavior is affecting you or the state of you're here-and-now feelings and perceptions (giving feedback or self-disclosure). Feedback is also a reaction by others, usually in terms of their feelings and perceptions, as to how your behavior is affecting them (receiving feedback). The term was originally borrowed from electrical engineering by Kurt Lewin, one of the founding fathers of laboratory training. In the field of rocketry, for example, each rocket has a built-in apparatus, which sends messages to a steering mechanism on the ground. When the rocket is off target, these messages come back to the steering mechanism, which makes adjustments and puts the rocket back on target again. In laboratory training, the group acts as a steering or corrective mechanism for individual members who, through the process of feedback, can be kept on target in terms of their own learning goals.

The process of giving and receiving feedback can be illustrated through a model called the Johari Window. The window was originally developed by two psychologists, Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham, for their program in group process. The model can be looked upon as a communication window through which you give and receive information about yourself and others.



Looking at the four panes in terms of columns and rows, the two columns represent the self and the two rows represent the group. Column one contains “things that I know about myself”; column two contains “things that I do not know about myself.” Row one contains “things that the group knows about me”; row two contains “things that the group does not know about me.” The information contained in these rows and columns is not static but moves from one pane to another as the level of mutual trust and the exchange of feedback varies in the group. As a consequence of this movement, the size and shape of the panes within the window will vary.

The first pane, called the Arena, contains things that I know about myself and about which the group knows. It is an area characterized by free and open exchange of information between myself and others. The behavior here is public and available to everyone. The Arena increases in size as the level of trust increases between individuals or between the individual and his group and more information, particularly personally relevant information is shared.

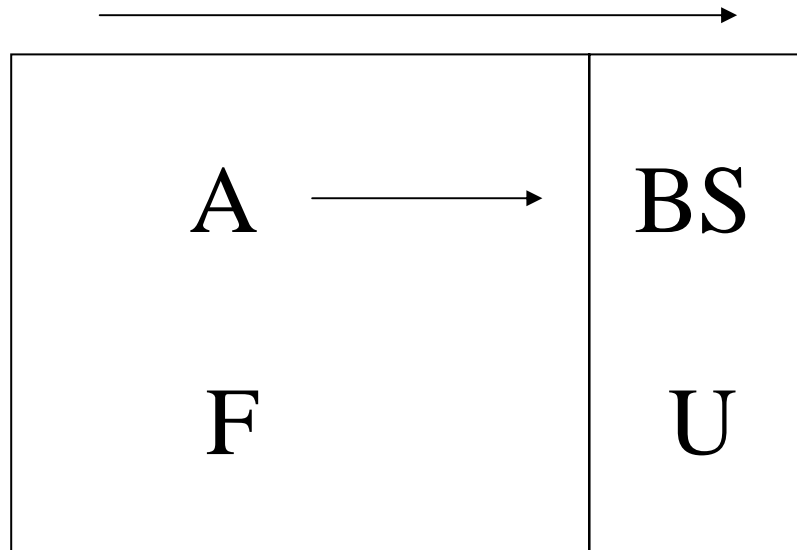
The second pane, the Blind Spot, contains information that I do not know about myself but of which the group may know. As I begin to participate in the group, I communicate all kinds of information of which I am not aware, but which is being picked up by other people. This information may be in the form of verbal cues, mannerism, the way I say things, or the style in which I relate to others. The extent to which we are insensitive to much of our own behavior and what it may communicate to others can be quite surprising and disconcerting. For example, a group member once told one that every time I was asked to comment on some personal or group issue, I always coughed before I answered.

In pane three are things that I know about myself but of which the group is unaware. For one reason or another, I keep this information hidden from them. My fear may be that if the group knew of my feelings, perceptions, and opinions about the group or individuals in the group, they might reject, attack, or hurt me in some way. As a consequence, I withhold this information. This pane is called the “Façade” or “Hidden Area.” One of the reasons I may keep this information to myself is that I do not see the supportive elements in the group. My assumption is that if I start revealing my feelings, thoughts, and reactions, group members might judge me negatively. I cannot find out, however, how members will really react unless I test these assumptions and reveal something of myself. In other words, if I do not take some risks, I will never learn the reality or unreality of my assumptions. On the other hand, I may keep certain kinds of information to myself when my motives for doing so are to control or manipulate others.

The last pane contains things that neither the group nor myself knows about me. Some of this material may be so far below the surface that I may never become aware of it. Other material, however, may be below the surface of awareness to both myself and the group but can be made public through an exchange of feedback. This area is called the “Unknown” and may represent such things as intrapersonal dynamics, early childhood memories, latent potentialities, and unrecognized resources. Since the internal boundaries can move backward and forward or up and down as a consequence of soliciting or giving feedback, it would be possible to have a window in which there would be no Unknown. Since knowing all about oneself is extremely unlikely, the Unknown in the Model illustrated is extended so that part of it will always remain unknown. If you are inclined to think in Freudian terms, you can call this extension the “Unconscious.”

One goal we may set for ourselves in the group setting is to decrease our Blind Spots, i.e., move the vertical line to the right. How can I reduce my Blind Spot? Since this area contains information that the group members know about me but of which I am unaware, the only way I can increase my awareness of this material is to get feedback from the group. As a consequence, I need to develop a receptive attitude to encourage group members to give me feedback. That is, I need to actively solicit feedback from group members in such a way that they will feel comfortable in giving it to me. The more I do this, the more the vertical line will move to the right.

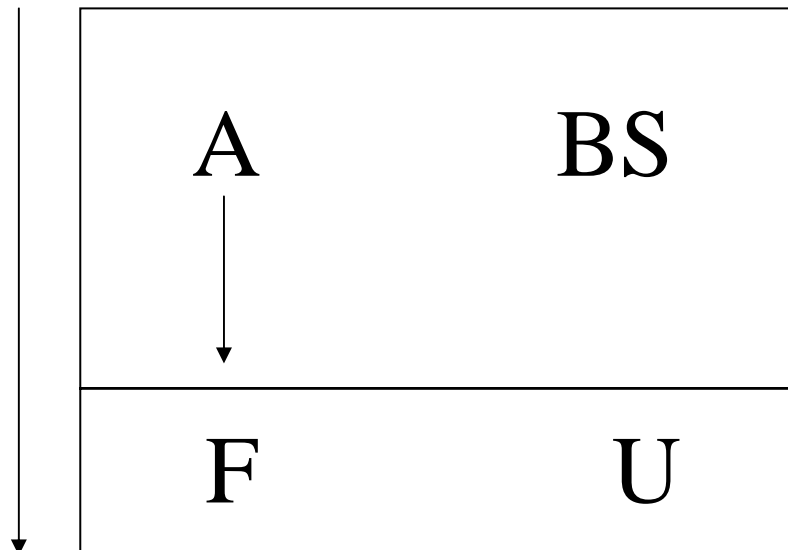
SOLICIT FEEDBACK



Another goal we may set for ourselves, in terms of our model, is to reduce our Façade, i.e., move the horizontal line down. How can I reduce my Façade? Since this area contains information that I have been keeping from the group, I can reduce my Façade by giving feedback to the group or group members concerning my reactions to what is going on in the group and inside of me. In this instance, I am giving feedback or disclosing myself in terms of my perceptions. Through this process the group knows where I stand and does not need to guess about or interpret what my behavior means. The more self-disclosure and feedback I give, the farther down I push the horizontal line.

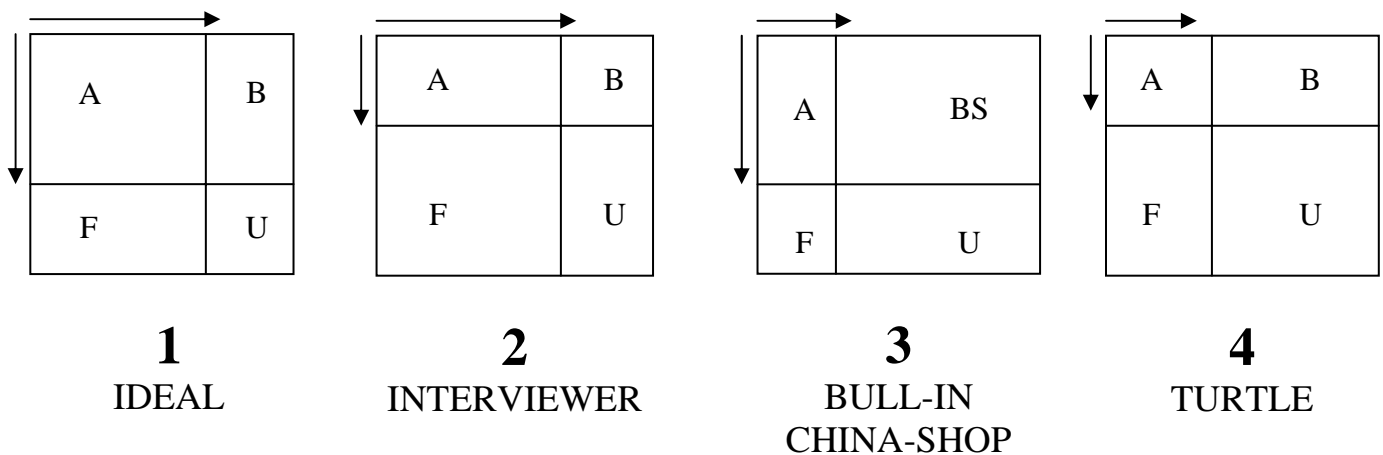
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You will notice that while we are reducing our Blind Spots and Facades through the process of giving and soliciting feedback, we are, at the same time, increasing that size of our Arena or public area.

In the process of giving and asking for feedback some people tend to do much more of one than the other, thereby creating an imbalance of these two behaviors. This imbalance may have consequences in terms of the individual's effectiveness in the group and group members' reactions to him. The size and shape of the Arena, therefore, is a feedback. In order to give you some idea of how to interpret windows, I would like to describe four different shapes, which characterize extreme ratios in terms of soliciting and giving feedback. These descriptions will give you some idea of how people, characterized by these windows, might appear to others in a group setting.



Number one is an “Ideal Window” in a group situation or in any other relationship that is significant to the person. The size of the Arena increases as the level of trust in the group increases, and the norms that have been developed for giving and receiving feedback facilitate this kind of exchange. The large Arena suggests that much of the person's behavior is aboveboard and open to other group members. As a consequence, there is less tendency for other members to interpret (or misinterpret) or project more personal meanings into the person's behavior. Very little guesswork is needed to understand what the person trying to do or communicate when his interactions are open both in terms of soliciting and giving feedback. The persons with whom you have casual acquaintance relationships you have with them. It is important to note, however, in your group or with some of your more significant relationships, that when most of your feelings, perceptions, and opinions are public, neither person has to engage in game behavior.

The large Façade in window number two suggests a person whose characteristic participation style is to ask questions of the group but not to give information or feedback. Thus the size of the Façade is inversely related to the amount of information or feedback flowing out from the individual. He responds to the group norm to maintain a reasonable level of participation,

however, by soliciting information. Many of his interventions are in the form of: “What do you think about this?” “How would you have acted if you were in my shoes?” “How do you feel about what I just said?” “What is your opinion about the group?” He wants to know where other people stand before he commits himself. You will notice that his “soliciting feedback” arrow is long, whereas his “giving feedback” arrow is short. Since this person does not commit himself in the group, it is hard to know where he stands on issues. At some point in the group’s history, other members may confront him with a statement similar to “hey, you are always asking me how I feel about what’s going on, but you never tell me how you feel.” This style, characterized as the “Interviewer,” may eventually evoke reactions of irritation, distrust, and withholding.

Window number three has a large Blind Spot. This person maintains his level of interaction primarily by giving feedback but soliciting very little. His participation style is to tell the group what he thinks of them, how he feels about what is going on in the group, and where he stands on group issues. Sometimes he may lash out at group members or criticize the group as a whole, believing that he is being open and aboveboard. For one reason or other, however, he either appears to be insensitive to the feedback given to him or does not hear what group members tell him. He may either be a poor listener or he may respond to feedback in such a way that group members are reluctant to continue to give him feedback, e.g., gets angry, cries, threatens to leave. As a consequence, he does not know how he is coming across to other people or what his impact is on them. Because he does not appear to utilize the corrective function (reality) of group feedback, many of his reactions or self-disclosures appear out of touch, evasive, or distorted. The result of his one-way communication (from him to others) is that he persists in behaving ineffectively. Since he is insensitive to the steering functions of the group, he does not know what behaviors to change. His “soliciting feedback” arrow is very short while his “giving feedback” arrow is long. This style of interaction comes across as a “Bull in the china Shop.”

The last window, having the large Unknown, represents the person who does not know much about himself, nor does the group know much about him. He may be the silent member or the “observer” in the group who neither gives nor asks for feedback. As you can see in window number four, the “soliciting” and “giving feedback” arrows are very short. He is the mystery man in the group because it is difficult for group members to know where this person stands in the group or where they stand with him. He appears to have a shell around him, which insulates him from other group members. When confronted about his lack of participation he may respond with, “I learn more by listening.” Group members who are not actively involved in the group or who do not participate get very little feedback because they do not provide the group with any data to which they can react. The person who is very active in the group exposes more facets of himself and provides the group members with more information about which they can give feedback. While this kind of exchange may cause the active participant some discomfort, he learns considerably more than the low participant who does not give or solicit feedback. The person characterizing this window is called the “Turtle” because his shell keeps people from getting in and himself from getting out. It takes a considerable amount of energy to maintain an Arena this small in a group situation because of the pressure which group norms exert against this kind of behavior. Energy channeled in maintaining a closed system is not available for self-exploration and personal growth.

The goal of soliciting feedback and self-disclosure or giving feedback is to move information from the Blind Spot and the Façade into the Arena, where it is available to everyone. In addition, through the process of giving and receiving feedback, new information can move from the Unknown into the Arena. A person may have an “aha” experience when he suddenly perceives a relationship between a here-and-now transaction in the group and some previous event. Movement of information from the Unknown into the Arena can be called “insight” or “inspiration.”

It is not an easy task to give feedback in such a way that it can be received without threat to the other person. This technique requires practice in developing sensitivity to other people’s needs and being able to put oneself in other people’s shoes. Some people feel that giving and receiving feedback cannot be learned solely by practice but requires a basic philosophy or set of values, which must first be learned. This basic philosophy is that the individual be accepting of himself and others. As this acceptance of self and others increases, the need to give feedback, which can be construed as evaluative or judgmental decreases.